

**PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016  
TIME: 7:00 P.M.  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
ROOM 208  
MIDDLETOWN, CT**

**Members Present:** Councilman Carl R. Chisem  
Councilman Thomas Serra  
Councilman Gene Nocera  
Councilman Sebastian Giuliano  
Councilman Philip Pessina

**Staff Present:** William Russo, Director of Public Works  
Christopher Holden, Deputy Director of Public Works  
Joseph Samolis, Chief of Staff

**Others:** Wendy Sheil, 17 Laurel Street  
Rebecca MacLacklan, 35 Clover Street  
Linda Bowers, 204 Cranberry Lane  
Krishna Winston, 655 Bow Lane  
Mary Bartolotta, 199 Talcott Ridge Drive

Chair Chisem opened the Public Works & Facilities Commission meeting at 7:00 P.M. Chair Chisem requested a motion to approve the minutes dated January 13, 2016. Motion to approve the minutes was seconded and approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

Krishna Winston, 655 Bow Lane, spoke on behalf of the Environmental Collection Impact Network. She stated that the parks and athletic field's renovations will make a great impact to the City; however, they have to be designed and maintained properly. She mentioned a consultant that would give good advice towards the preparation of the soil, how the drainage needs to be engineered, what pitch is ideal and how to provide irrigation in dry weather. The type of grass used can help with eliminating the production of weeds; they are heartier and would require less frequent mowing.

Rebecca MacLacklan, 35 Clover Street, works as a volunteer with Project Green Lawn. She emphasized the risks caused by hazardous lawn chemicals. She recommended implementing organic turf maintenance on a pilot basis for the first few fields that the city renovates.

Linda Bowers, 204 Cranberry Lane, stated that she wants to support the renovations to improve the fields. She would like them to be non-toxically maintained.

Joseph Samolis, Chief of Staff, spoke on behalf of the Middletown High School crewing program as well as the public crewing program. During the past budget cycle, much support was received for the Board of Education and public crewing program where CNR money was allocated to help pay down the boat deck with new shell purchases. He asked for additional funding for the CNR line to correct the issues with the coaches' launch taking on water. The current debt is \$33,500.00 for the rowing shells. However, there is some money leftover in the CNR, plus some money from trade-ins, so the total amount

requested would be \$20,000.00. The safety concerns will be addressed as well as bringing the equipment up to a standard where it can be maintained moving forward.

Wendy Sheil, 17 Laurel Street and head coach for Middletown High School, stated that she would like to be able to buy and sell equipment within the next few years. She stated that she needs one last push to get the students where they need to be with a financially manageable program in place.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Director Russo stated that there is no correspondence.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

A motion was made to amend the agenda and move item 5e, Crew Request, up before item 5a, Parks & Athletic Fields Renovations. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

- a. Parks & Athletic Fields Renovations – Councilman Serra stated that there is no committee appointed to take care of this matter. Hence, this is a new issue until there is a committee put in place to take a look at the ordinance. This would provide an understanding on what needs to be done moving forward. There is one item that may need to be defined as a concern to the public speakers. There is a section in the ordinance that reads, “The installation of new multi-use natural grass fields...” Councilman Serra stated that it is unclear whether or not this means organic grass fields or non-organic grass fields. It has not been determined if this is a phased project where a building committee will be assigned for the phases, or if it shall be assigned to the Public Works & Facilities Commission. According to the ordinance, if the project amount is under \$500,000.00, which Councilman Serra believes should be \$750,000.00, then the Public Works & Facilities Commission would be assigned. Councilman Serra recommended that this item be left on the table until the decisions have been made.

One of the commissioners asked whether or not this has to go through the Office of the General Counsel. Councilman Serra stated that the General Council is taking a look at this situation and deciding what needs to be done.

Councilman Pessina stated that from his understanding, the threshold should be raised from \$500,000.00 to \$750,000.00. If the Mayor agrees with the change in the amount of the threshold, the Public Works & Facilities Commission will take on the smaller parts of the renovations project. The larger parts should be taken care of through a committee. After taking a look at the ordinance, the committee will make a suggestion. Any part of this phase, with the Councilwoman’s amendment, should go back to the council with the final adoption.

Director Russo stated that he has already reached out to the UConn Agriculture School, a gentleman named Jason Henderson whom has a PhD in this field. He asked him to give a list of all of the pros and cons on soils, field use, products, etc.

Mary Bartolotta, Talcott Ridge Drive, stated that the organic upkeep should be investigated in a responsible financial manner. She stated that she will continue to follow up with the General Counsel. In the end, the Council will need to make final approval on the decision.

Councilman Serra made a motion to leave this item on the table until the committees are determined. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

- b. Sidewalk Funding – Director Russo stated that this is an issue where in the past there has been no money in the budget to repair the 100 miles of sidewalk in the City. He has recently been told to cut \$350,000.00 from this fiscal years' Public Works budget. Sidewalk that isn't on any of our road bonds cannot be touched by road bond funds. In the past, a list was conducted as "sidewalk various locations." The bond council told Finance Department that the list cannot be labeled as such. Director Russo stated that he can retrieve a list for spring and summer work that can be conducted, which is a lot more than the \$75,000.00. This amount does not go a long way when it comes to construction and repair. His goal is to get \$350,000.00 any way possible, even if it means shifting everything to the town aid funds.

Director Russo stated that he wanted to bring the issue to the attention of the commission. If the commission accepts, a list will be put together with the Sidewalk Conformance Inspector along with a dollar figure.

Councilman Serra stated that sidewalks that are involved with Insurance and Claims should be moved to the top of the repair list.

Councilman Pessina asked if there was a line item for sidewalk repairs. Director Russo stated that he believes it was cut years ago. In the past, the Council has given \$75,000.00 at a time and put into sidewalk repair. It is possible, however not recommended, to do the same this year. Funding is needed regardless of how it is retrieved.

Director Russo stated that he will put together a list for the March commission meeting and then come up with a source on how to go about the funding for sidewalks.

- c. Fees For Use Of Parks – Director Russo mentioned that the projected fee structure for park use is \$25.00 per hour for residents and \$50.00 per hour for non-residents to use Harbor Park. For all other parks, the fee is \$10.00 per hour for residents and \$20.00 per hour for non-residents.

He also stated that there have been issues in the past where people are coming to use parks at 8:00 in the morning and staying until 8:00 at night. Police have had to be called to remove these large groups of people from the picnic areas in the parks. Director Russo feels that people are coming to the City because we are the only community that does not have a fee structure for our parks.

Councilman Serra asked if there is a waiver included in the information and conditions regarding the reservation of the City Parks/Pavilions. Director Russo stated that it can be done, although he has never had to ask the Council to waive a fee for a picnic park event.

Councilman Pessina is concerned about the \$20.00 charge for non-residents. He believes that the minimum should be \$25.00-\$30.00. Director Russo stated that the riverfront is a bit different than other parks. If the party consists of more than 75 people, there are larger charges applied. Councilman Pessina stated that a fee structure should be made up to cover the costs to support the maintenance of the picnic areas. The fees can then be waived if deemed appropriate.

Director Russo stated that if the ordinance was adopted at ordinance study and the Council, anyone who has rented will be grandfathered in.

Councilman Pessina suggested that Director Russo have his staff re-evaluate the document and bring it back to the commission. Director Russo stated that he will do so as well as retrieving fee structures from surrounding towns

- d. Building Permit Refund – SolarCity, \$214.90 – A motion was made to approve the building permit refund to SolarCity in the amount of \$214.90. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.
- e. Crew Request – One of the commissioners moved approval for the crew request. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.
- f. Building Committee Requirement for Park Bond Authorization – Director Russo stated that this item is at the request of Councilman Giuliano. A formal opinion was given from the General Counsel regarding the building committee requirement for park bond authorization.

Councilman Giuliano stated that he spoke with the General Counsel and found out that a building committee does not have to be appointed to oversee spending \$33,450,000.00 on a bond issuance for the improvement of athletic fields, parks and trails city-wide. He also found out that an existing council can manage a committee and let the Public Works Commission serve as the building committee.

Councilman Serra stated that the bottom line for past practice, there has to be at least one building committee for a bond issuance of \$33,000,000.00.

There was a discussion on whether or not one building committee will be involved or numerous for the various phases of the project. After the committee decisions are made, the line items will be discussed, prepared and sent to the council. Money will not be utilized that cannot be handled; everything will be thoroughly looked into.

Mary Bartolotta stated that this discussion will be on the agenda for this month with the General Counsel. She requests that recommendations towards this ordinance be sent in so that they can be part of a real discussion.

- g. Discussion On The Front Patio At City Hall – The commission had a discussion regarding the conditions of the front patio at city hall. Director Russo will present the projected cost for repairs at a future meeting.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. Update on Tennis Courts – Director Russo stated that he asked Deputy Director Holden to give an update on the tennis courts to the commission.

Deputy Director Holden gave an update and stated that there were suggestions made that will improve the site overall including rain gardens towards improving water quality. There are water culverts that will be removed and filled in to improve access to the other side of the property. The culverts will then be installed and improved in another location on site. There will be 25 total spots, 15 to start and 10 more as necessary. The Pat Kidney field area will also have access to these parking spots.

Director Russo stated that in March, if all goes well during the public hearing and with Millone & MacBroom, then the bidding process will begin for this project. The approvals from Zoning & Wetlands were both received.

- b. January 2016 Public Works Overtime Report – So far, \$84,000.00 was spent for snow removal year to date. A total of \$160,000.00 was spent during last year's snow removal overtime expenditures.
- c. January 2016 Building Permits – The January 2016 Building Permits report were reviewed by the commission.

**OTHER:**

- a. January 2016 Monthly Report – Highway Division – The January 2016 monthly report was reviewed by the commission.
- b. January 2016 Overtime Report – Parks Division – The January 2016 overtime report was reviewed by the commission.

As there was no further discussion, the Public Works & Facilities Commission meeting adjourned at 8:44 P.M.